



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/965,679	09/27/2001	Trent M. Molter	PES-0040	2897
23462 7590 01/25/2007 CANTOR COLBURN, LLP - PROTON 55 GRIFFIN ROAD SOUTH BLOOMFIELD, CT 06002			EXAMINER WILLS, MONIQUE M	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1745	
SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE		MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE	
3 MONTHS		01/25/2007	PAPER	

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/965,679

Applicant(s)

MOLTER ET AL.

Examiner

Monique M. Wills

Art Unit

1745

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 November 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 2,11-14,19,20,22,23,27 and 55-639 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 11-14,19,20,22,23 and 27-29 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 21 October 2002 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- ☐ Other: _____.

Response to Amendment

This Office Action is responsive to the Amendment filed November 7, 2006. The following rejections have been overcome:

- Claims 11-13, 16-18, 23,25,27, 55-57, 60 & 63 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138.
- Claims 11-13, 16 & 20 & 22 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wakamatsu U.S. Patent 6,231,053.
- Claims 19, 29 & 61 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claims 11,23 & 55, in view of Leonida et al. U.S. Patent 5,324,565.
- Claims 20, 28, 58 & 59 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claims 11,23 & 55, in view of Furuse et al. JP 402245579.
- Claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claim 11 above, in view of Kuriyama et al. U.S. Pub. 2004/0091754.

Art Unit: 1745

- Claims 62 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claim 55 above.

Claims 55-63 are newly rejected as follows:

- Claims 55-57, 60 & 63 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138.
- Claim 61 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claims 11,23 & 55, in view of Leonida et al. U.S. Patent 5,324,565.
- Claims 58 & 59 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claims 11,23 & 55, in view of Furuse et al. JP 402245579.
- Claims 62 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claim 55 above.

Interference

An interference of claims 55-63 has been requested. However, an interference cannot be initiated since a prerequisite for interference under 37 CFR 1.606 is that the claim be patentable to the applicant subject to a judgment in the interference. In the instant case, claims 55-63 are not patentable.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 11-14, 19-20 & 22 are allowable over the prior art of record, because the prior art is silent to a dimpled pressure pad comprising an elastomeric member threaded through the dimples.

Claims 23 and 27-29 are allowable over the prior art of record, because the prior art is silent to a corrugated pressure pad comprising an elastomeric member threaded through the raised portions in the corrugated member.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

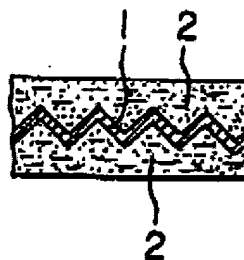
A person shall be entitled to a patent unless -

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 55-57, 60 & 63 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138.

Art Unit: 1745

In re claim 55, the material is a single sheet of electrically-conductive material with a top and bottom surface being bent up and down to include a plurality of alternating ribs and channels. See Figure 2. The elastomeric material (2) is mounted within the channels. The limitation with respect to the elastomeric material being compressed to lie flush with the ribs and exert substantially uniform pressure across each of the top and bottom surface, is considered an inherent property of the gasket taught by Yamamoto, because the reference teaches the exact same structure made of the same materials set for by Applicant.

FIG. 2

With respect tot claim 56, the ribs and channels are linear and parallel to one another. Specifically, the ribs on one surface, and the channels are on the opposite surface.

With respect to claim 57, the electrically-conductive material is steel (col. 4, lines 35-40).

As to claim 60, the elastomeric material is rubber (col. 3, lines 3-40).

Art Unit: 1745

With respect to claim 63, the electrically conductive material is rectangular in shape. See Figure. 2.

Therefore, Yamamoto anticipates the instant claims.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 61 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claims 11,23 & 55, in view of Leonida et al. U.S. Patent 5,324,565.

Yamamoto teaches a metal gasket coated with elastomeric rubber as described in the § 102 rejected recited hereinabove.

Yamamoto is silent to a silicon (claim 61) coated gaskets.

Leonida teaches the equivalence of rubber and silicon (col. 3, lines 35-45) as elastomeric gasket coatings.

Yamamoto and Leonida are analogous art, because they are from the same field of endeavor, namely, fabrication of elastomeric coated gaskets.

Art Unit: 1745

Therefore, although Yamamoto teaches rubber instead of silicon, Leonida shows that said silicon materials and rubber are equivalent materials known in the art. Therefore, because these materials were art recognized equivalents at the time the instant invention was made, one having ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to substitute on material for the other.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 58 & 59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claims 11,23 & 55, in view of Furuse et al. JP 402245579.

Yamamoto teaches a metal gasket coated with elastomeric rubber as described in the § 102 rejected recited hereinabove.

Art Unit: 1745

Yamamoto does not expressly disclose a gasket of copper (claim 58) or niobium (claim 59).

However, Furuse teaches that it is conventional to employ copper and niobium as gasket materials.

Yamamoto and Furuse are analogous art, because they are from the same field of endeavor, namely, fabricating gaskets.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the instant invention was to employ copper and/or niobium in the gasket of Yamamoto, since the selection of a known material based on its suitability for its intended use supported a prima facie obviousness determination in *Sinclair & Carroll Co. v. Interchemical Corp.*, 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945).

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Art Unit: 1745

Claims 62 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. U.S. Patent 4,485,138 as applied to claim 55 above.

Yamamoto teaches an electrically-conductive compression pad as described hereinabove.

The reference is silent to the electrically-conductive material being circular in shape.

However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the instant invention was made to employ an electrically-conductive material in a circular shape to conform to tubular electrolysis cell stacks. The skilled artisan recognizes that the pad should have the same shape as the electrode so that the pressure is exerted uniformly across the sheet. Therefore, it is necessary for the material to have the same shape as the electrode material.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 11-14, 19-23 & 27-29 are persuasive and the rejections are withdrawn. With respect to claims 55-63, Applicant contends that Yamamoto is neither anticipatory or obvious over the instant claims because the reference is silent to the elastomeric material lying

Art Unit: 1745

flush with the ribs *when* the elastomeric material is compressed. Specifically, when the material of Yamamoto is compressed, the elastomeric material will always lie above every surface of the material. This argument is not persuasive. First, although the claims require that the elastomeric material lies flush with the ribs, this limitation does not preclude the elastomeric material from extending above the ribs. In other words, the term “ flush” does not appear to require a flat surface. However, assuming *arguendo* that “ flush” requires a flat surface, the limitations in the claim are conditional. The claim language does not require compression of the conductive material, because the language is optional. In accordance with MPEP 2106, language that suggests or makes optional but does not require steps to be performed or does not limit a claim to a particular structure does not limit the scope of a claim or claim limitation. Therefore, “ flush” does not limit the scope of the claim.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Monique Wills whose telephone number is (571) 272-1309. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 8:30am to 5:00 pm.

Art Unit: 1745

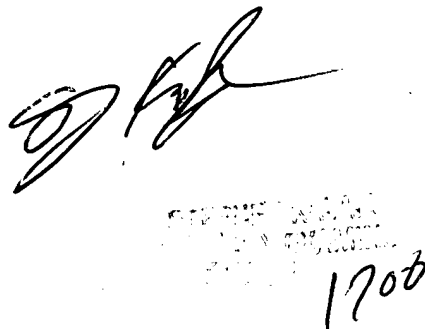
If attempts to reach Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan, may be reached at 571-272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

MW

1/22/06

A handwritten signature in black ink is located above a circular official stamp. The signature appears to be 'D. H. Ryan'. The stamp is partially legible and contains the text 'PATENT EXAMINER' and 'UNIT 1745'. Below the stamp, the number '1700' is handwritten.